

Comparison-Contrast Essay

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

comparison-contrast essay: essay that explores the similarities and differences between two subjects

HERE'S HOW: PREWRITING AND DRAFTING

Step 1: Analyze the prompt. You may write your essay based on a specific prompt. Read the prompt to find out the topics you should compare and contrast. Also make sure you know your audience and purpose.

Step 2: Look for similarities and differences. Think about the two topics you will be comparing and contrasting. Look for elements that are alike and elements that are different. Use a Y diagram to record your findings.

Step 3: Write a working thesis statement. Summarize the similarities and differences in a working thesis statement. You might revise the statement as you draft the essay.

Step 4: Collect evidence. Use a two-column chart to record facts and details that support your thesis. Make the left column "Similarities/Differences" and the right column "Evidence." Put similarities and differences from the Y diagram in the left column and supporting evidence in the right column.

Step 5: Choose an organizational pattern. Organize your essay in one of two ways.

- **Subject by subject:** Discuss all the points of one subject first, then all the points of the other.
- **Point by point:** Compare and contrast one point at a time for both subjects.

If you aren't sure which pattern to use, try each one to see which works better.

Step 6: Include specific facts and details to show your key ideas. Refer to the facts and details you collected in step 4. Incorporate them into your essay to make it stronger and more convincing.

Step 7: Use transitions to clarify the relationships between ideas. Words such as *both*, *neither*, and *like* indicate similarities, while words and phrases such as *however*, *by contrast*, and *on the other hand* indicate differences.

STUDENT LESSON SUMMARY, CONTINUED

HERE'S HOW: REVISING AND EDITING

Step 8: Make your introduction engaging. Read your introduction aloud. Rewrite sentences that seem obvious or boring. Add an interesting observation, a rhetorical question, or some dialogue to capture the reader's attention.

Step 9: Use language that is appropriate for your essay. Read your essay out aloud, and identify and change language that sounds too casual.

Step 10: Use strong, specific words. Underline vague words and phrases, such as *really*, *kind of*, *sort of*, *lots*, and *things*. Replace these with more precise terms.

Step 11: Fine-tune your conclusion to leave a powerful impression. Ask a peer reader to highlight parts of your conclusion that are confusing or that need more elaboration. Include details and explanations that clarify your ideas and show your reader a new way of thinking about your topics.